

Washington, DC — Today, Congressman Joe Sestak (D-PA), the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and a member of the House Armed Services Committee, released the following statement: — “I said at the time of President Bush’s proposed surge of U.S. forces to Iraq that I was concerned about U.S. security because of our continued intervention in Iraq – a tragic misadventure that does not permit us to best address more important security challenges throughout the world. My military experience also told me that you don’t “double down” on a bad military bet by using more troops as the President proposed, when an increase had not worked before: when we tried it last August with 12,000 troops added in Baghdad, the violence only increased. The facts show that security has not improved since the surge; the opposite has happened. The violence is worse. This is a civil war; only a decision by Iraqi political leaders to end the sectarian fighting will bring about stability. We need a change in strategy that sets a specific date by which we redeploy to create the leverage to force the Iraqi leaders to do that.

We also need to have confidence in our diplomatic ability to lead regional negotiations for stability, particularly with Syria and Iran, and set a ‘date certain’ for redeploying out of Iraq, within a year, to serve as the necessary catalyst to have the Iraqis accept the reality of the personal consequence of not assuming responsibility for their nation. In fact, sending more troops to Iraq has only increased their dependence on America, both politically and militarily. Moreover, this has pushed our military to the breaking point and degraded our military and strategic security readiness; today there is not any Army unit here at home – active, Guard or reserve – that is in a state of readiness that would be ready to deploy to an emergency that suddenly occurred in the world.

I believe we need pursue an alternative strategy, which is why I introduced binding legislation setting our redeployment from Iraq within a year. The rationale for doing so is clear: redeployment from Iraq will enhance our security by allowing us to properly address other potential challenges around the world, and by allowing us to resolve the concerns about the readiness of our Armed Forces here at home.

Only by a strategy of setting a date certain, a deliberate timetable for redeployment, are we able to create the leverage for the political leaders in Iraq to acknowledge and accept that they must undertake the difficult political steps necessary to cease the sectarian violence, and create a stable, unified nation.”

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for

31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.